



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

*Executive Office of Environmental Affairs*

*100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900*

*Boston, MA 02114-2119*

Mitt Romney  
GOVERNOR

Kerry Healey  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Robert W. Gollledge, Jr.  
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000  
Fax: (617) 626-1181  
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

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CONTACTS: Vanessa Gulati

(617) 626-1119

## **SIX COMMUNITIES TO DEVELOP VISION AND ACTION PLANS THROUGH AN URBANRIVER VISIONS PLANNING GRANT**

Six new UrbanRiver Visions will be developed this year—the first since the original eight plans were developed under the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) UrbanRiver Visions Program in 2002. EOEA has selected Goody-Clancy, a nationally recognized design and planning firm, to conduct visioning charrettes in six communities. These day-long events will bring together stakeholders to create a consensus vision for underutilized and environmentally-degraded riverfront sites. The planning exercises will result in a vision and action plan for revitalizing these critical areas.

The project focus areas are:

Greenfield: Just south of downtown, the project area includes a handful of industrial and brownfield properties, notably the Greenfield Tap and Die site. A proposed bikeway is slated for the area which has suffered from flooding and degraded water quality.

Haverhill: The downtown district is characterized by underutilized industrial properties, structures that back up to but ignore the river, and a shortage of park resources. Goals include plans for a river walk, better transit-oriented development, and a connection to the Bradford neighborhood.

Pittsfield: Along the West Branch of the Housatonic, the area is already a focus of several initiatives. Items to be considered include removing a dam, creating a greenway connection between two anchor parks, improving the degraded water quality, and combating the lack of appreciation of the river as a neighborhood asset.

Buckland/Shelburne Falls: The site focuses on the soon-to-be-vacant mill complex across from downtown Buckland/Shelburne. Re-use planning for the mill buildings as well as open space protection planning are needed. Another goal is to reach consensus on providing access to the glacial potholes, a tourist attraction for the community, without risking liability for the Town.

Grafton: The Farnumsville Mill Site needs assessment; re-use planning, and subsequent rezoning to determine the best approach to revitalize this historic mill along the Blackstone River.

Northbridge: Also along the Blackstone, the Rockdale Mill Village needs revitalization. Issues include: flooding; riverbank erosion; incompatible zoning; a brownfield site; and too much impervious surface adjacent to the river.

“The UrbanRiver Visions Initiative is helping communities create a vision for their riverfronts and then turn that vision into reality,” said EOEa Secretary Robert Golledge. “By reconnecting downtowns with their rivers and restoring the riparian environment, these places are able to provide improved habitat, recreational and economic development opportunities.”

EOEA launched the Urban River Visions Initiative in 2002 by convening a collaborative planning process with the aim of developing a vision and action plan for urban riverfronts in seven cities and towns in Massachusetts. The communities that were chosen represent a mix of size and geographic locations: Athol, Chicopee, Easthampton, Fall River, Hudson, Lawrence, and Worcester. Under this initiative, people in each of the municipalities created a unique plan based on their community's needs, including housing, natural resource conservation, recreation, and commercial development.

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